

Single Mothers and the COVID-19 Pandemic

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INTRODUCTION

- The COVID-19 pandemic was challenging and stressful for everyone but may have been especially challenging for single mothers.
- Single-parent households are viewed as one of the major issues impacting children's outcomes. However, research has demonstrated that family structure does not impact children's well-being and adjustment (DePaulo, 2015).
- Singles are discriminated against in general and stereotypes about single mothers are prevalent (DePaulo & Morris, 2006).
- The goal of the proposed study is to examine the impact perceived discrimination has on single mothers and their parent-child(ren) relationship during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, we want to examine the intersection of being a single mother and race.

Hypotheses:

- Single mothers in the discrimination condition will report feeling more discriminated against compared to single mothers in the control condition.
- Within the discrimination condition, single mothers from underrepresented groups will report feeling less loved and accepted by their child(ren) compared to white single mothers. This effect will not be observed in the control condition.

METHODS

Participants:

- 200 single mothers will be recruited via Prolific.
- Participants will be compensated \$10.

Procedures:

- Participants will be asked basic demographics. Participants will be randomly assigned the parenting status discrimination or control condition. Next, participants will complete a measure of current mood and a manipulation check assessing how discriminated against they felt recalling the event.
- Finally, participants will report how loved and accepted they feel by their child(ren) via Qualtrics.

Measures:

- Parenting Status Discrimination Manipulation: In the parenting status discrimination condition, participants will be asked to vividly recall a time when they were the target of discrimination or prejudice based on being a single mother during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the control condition, participants will be asked to recall a time they engaged in a routine daily event as a single mother during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Manipulation Check: Participants will be asked to rate how discriminated against they felt during the event they recalled (e.g., "How discriminated against did you feel during the event?") on a 7-point Likert-scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*).
- Love and Acceptance by Child(ren): The 9-item Reflected Appraisals (adapted by Murray et al., 1998) will be used (e.g., "I am confident that my child(ren) will always want to look beyond my faults and see the best in me.") on a 7-point Likert-scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*).

PREDICTED RESULTS

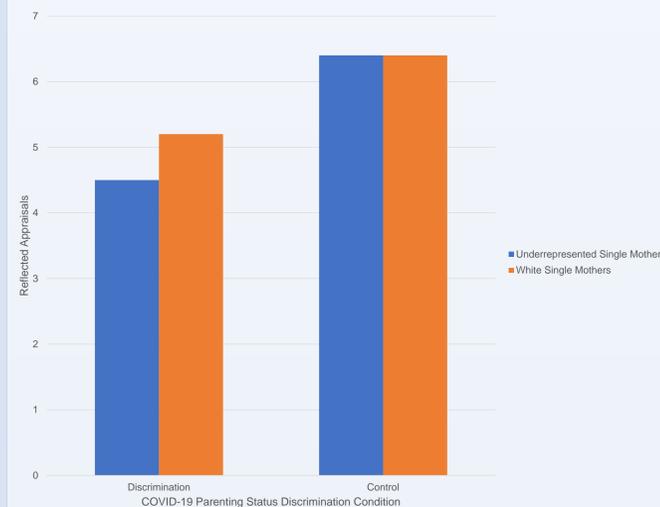
Manipulation Check:

- We predict that single mothers in the discrimination condition will report feeling more discriminated against compared to single mothers in the control condition.

Single Parenting Discrimination, Race, and Reflected Appraisals:

- We predict that within the discrimination condition, single mothers of color will report feeling less loved and accepted by their child(ren) compared to white single mothers. This effect will not be observed in the control condition.

Figure 1: Parenting Status Discrimination Condition and Race Predicting Reflected Appraisals



DISCUSSION

- Understanding how and why people discriminate against single mothers can inform interventions to reduce discrimination against single mothers.
- One limitation of the study is that our sample may not be nationally representative of race. Future research should examine perceived discrimination with variability on race and socioeconomic status.
- Research has shown how broadening psychological science by examining intersecting identities is important (Buchanan et al., 2021). Future research should look at how identity impacts relationships especially within the intersection of multiple identities.

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